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Owling Banding has sold out!!!

Covid continues to affect day to day operations of the BBO, both in limiting operations and funding. After cancelling Spring Migration Monitoring, Big Birding Breakfast, the Student Internships, Young Ornithologists' Workshop, Fall Migration banding, as well as the popular Steaks and Saw-whets event, BBO finally started Northern Saw-whet Owl banding September 1st.

In order to host Covid-safe visits, tickets to observe owl banding were limited by pre-purchased online tickets. Because tickets for owl banding quickly sold out BBO decided to host more evenings, having visitors join them 6 nights a week! They have captured Northern Saw-whet Owls, Long-eared Owls and Flying Squirrels to date.

All tickets for the entire owl season have sold out quickly! Thank you all for your support and we look forward to having you join us this fall season with our owl migration monitoring program.



BirdSmart Education Program

As winter approaches so does the start of the BBO's BirdSmart Education Program! From mid-November until the end of April, BirdSmart will be offering both in person and digital presentations to classrooms (Pre K – 12) about bird conservation, climate change and more! Presentations are 1 hour long and are tailored to match the Alberta curriculum. With bringing a live owl or falcon into the classroom/webinar our message on the importance of conservation and taking personal action is more impactful. Learn about what presentations we are offering and how to book your exclusive time with one of our education birds by visiting our [website](#) or contacting our education staff at education@beaverhillbirds.com



New staff: Jon Van Arragon returns to school and Shane Abernethy arrives from Ontario!



Despite the cancellation of key programs, the BBO Board decided to go ahead with the hiring of summer bander Jon Van Arragon (left) in May, followed by Shane Abernethy in September. Jon was a Young Ornithologist attendee and has been a volunteer with BBO for a couple of years now. Together with Sara Pearce Meijerink, Jon conducted the morning census route, a Breeding Bird Survey and undertook many of the jobs the interns normally conduct. This included the monitoring and banding of the House Wren and Tree Swallows in the grids, in addition to monitoring bats and Northern Saw-whet Owl boxes. Shane (below), originates from Ontario, bringing banding experience from Long Point Bird Observatory and a Masters of Environmental Sciences- welcome to BBO!



BBO Needs your Support!

Why? To finish our new Banding Lab in a challenging Year!

As reported in the April Willet, the Board decided pre-pandemic to go ahead with the replacement of the banding lab at BBO with a larger well-insulated building. We had the funds. After many delays in obtaining permits with tireless work by Chair Geoff Holroyd and Rose and John Scott, permits were finally obtained from Alberta Public Lands. Meanwhile COVID-19 arrived, creating not only rises in building materials but a shortage in some materials - the roof trusses will be delayed until October. The additional loss of revenue from events, educational talks and the curtailing of Casinos has hit BBO hard, resulting in a deficit in the building fund. We were committed to the contractor and are going ahead but will have to quickly make up for the shortfall. But we have you, our supporters, and are confident we can do it. Already, Board members Geoff Holroyd and Rose Scott have generously donated \$3,000 and others have contributed so already we have raised about \$10,000! THANK YOU! Here are our current needs:

Solar: \$35,000

Shortfall on Building: ~\$10,000

Tower for Motus. WiFi and improved Cell coverage: ~\$5,000

Road Improvement: \$5,000 for gravel

You can donate through our web site: <http://beaverhillbirds.com/get-involved/donate/> and a tax receipt will be received. Or talk to one of our Board Members

Out with the Old (the building being demolished, Jon returning to school) and in with the New (Shane arriving and the new building under construction)!





Construction is well underway! The first floor is built and construction crews will start on the front deck and second story shortly.



Shane (above) admiring the larger banding lab where we will conduct our research and host the public for many years to come.



Sara (left), our Head Biologist, is thrilled with the progress of our new building construction! Donate today to help us complete this project and all the future educational programming and environmental learning that will occur in our new banding lab!

Rain, Rain, and more Rain

The rains were another challenge for the staff, aside from now working without a banding lab. The staff were forced to close the access road for 2 weeks when the road deteriorated after heavy rains. Volunteer Bob Buskus brought in a bobcat to smooth one of the worse areas. Thanks, Bob. However, the rains have also meant Beaverhill Lake has continued to fill and water is still running in the creeks this fall. Read a more detailed report below.





Photos: Sara Pearce Meijerink
(featured with her stuck vehicle)

Rain, beavers and COVID result in flooding into the Beaverhill Natural Area

Like any good ‘who did it’ mystery, several events caused the deep ruts in

the trails into BBO. The first in a sequence of events was the heavy rainfall from early May until mid-July. The first rain of 8/10 inch arrived overnight on May 3-4. By July 1, we received five downpours between 1-2 inches. By July 15, 15” of rain had left our natural area soaked. The annual average rainfall in our region is only 18”, so we had over 80% in only 2.5 months.

The beavers loved it. Running water is their challenge. They enlarged their dam across Lister Lake! Actually Lister Lake is two waterbodies connected by channels which is where the beavers have their dam. Consequently, water did not flow over the weir at the north end of Lister Lake, rather it was backup in the southern basin of Lister Lake and flooded overland through the natural area. Meanwhile, upstream water was backing up in Amisk Creek at the control dam near the bridge. Water released from there flooded ‘Kallel field’ flowed over Rowans Route and into the Stauffers’ pea field on the south side of Rowans Route. The Stauffers lost 25 acres of peas due to this flooding! This water could not escape because of the water backed up by the beavers in Lister Lake! Are you still with me? 😊

With all this rain falling and water backed up, flooding, high water table and saturate soils were inevitable. Then vehicles arrived. With COVID-19 restrictions being slowly lifted lots of people wanted to get out for a walk, walk their dog, and enjoy nature, normally desirable activities. Our usual access to the natural area is to turn off Rowan’s Route and drive across the pasture, which was now soft, even flooded in places. Deep ruts resulted, so deep that I had to take my 4x4 truck to pull Sara’s 4 wheel drive Subaru out! Milo Stauffer suggested that we lock the access gate to his land, and encourage people to walk across the pasture. We did this until someone tried to break the lock, then sabotage it with material in the key hole. Apparently someone felt they had the right to trespass on this land with their vehicle and were annoyed that they couldn’t. Around the same time, our ‘Please Walk’ sign was stolen! We removed the damaged

lock, but many people continued to park on Rowan's Route and enjoy the stroll across the pasture; actually a pleasant addition to the stroll in the forested natural area.

Looking forward to 2021, we will install a pedestrian style at the gate to allow everyone easy walking access to the pasture and natural area. The cost to rehabilitate the deep ruts in the pasture is beyond the means of Beaverhill Bird Observatory. We have to thank the Stauffer families for permission to cross their land and lease to access the natural area. If you are going to the natural area and BBO for exercise and nature appreciation, please park on the roadside and enjoy the walk across the pasture. You will see more of the sky than in the forest, and often better looks at birds that are flying past.

Geoff Holroyd, BBO, Chair

Nature Alberta Update

As you may be aware, our Beaverhill Bird Observatory is a part of Nature Alberta, the organization that connects and supports clubs like ours across the province.

They publish Nature Alberta Magazine four times a year. The Summer issue has just come out — if you have a subscription, it's probably already arrived in your mailbox. This issue features articles about bull trout, Richardson's ground squirrels, Alberta's rabbits and hares, and a comprehensive look at recent shifts in environmental policy — and what you can do about it.

You can always view the magazine online for free at naturealberta.ca/magazine. If you want a print subscription of your own, you can purchase one at Nature Alberta's online store for \$30 a year.

In celebration of their 50th anniversary, Nature Alberta is also offering Individual Lifetime Memberships for only \$10. If you're concerned about the state of nature in our province, supporting this organization with your membership and/or magazine subscription helps create a unified voice for the appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment. Get your lifetime membership at Nature Alberta's online store. Visit the Nature Alberta website.

Thanks to the Edmonton Nature Club for allowing us to reprint the following from their newsletter.

Birders, fall migration is on!

Fall migration is slower compared to the rapid movement of birds in the spring when there's a race to claim prime breeding territory. **Shorebirding** can be productive and mid-August is peak diversity for migrating **warblers**. The following section contains some basic info on shorebirds. Reprinted from the Edmonton Nature Club Newsletter- thanks for sharing. And Thanks to Ann Carter and Gerald Romanchuk.

In late summer, shorebirds linger along muddy lake edges to feed as, in contrast to spring, the birds encounter better weather and food availability is generally higher since invertebrates are more active in warmer weather and more abundant after reproduction. Local birds mix with those from northern breeding grounds and by mid-August we're seeing adult birds along with hatch-year birds. Many of them will have different colour or pattern than we saw in spring depending on their new/moulting feathers. Remember that although there may be colour change the bird shapes and proportions remain the same!

A couple of simple examples:

Avocets change from their brilliant summer plumage to a plainer black and white winter plumage.



Sanderlings may be easy to pick out of a crowd as the only noticeably white peeps.



Moult strategies are different over the shorebird species but many follow the **complex alternate strategy**.

CAS involves:

- a hatch year juvenile plumage
- every year after that an alternate (breeding) plumage which moults into basic (winter) plumage

Black-bellied Plovers follow CAS therefore, in Aug/Sept the first year Black-bellied Plovers would have juvenile plumage while adults would be in various stages transitioning from alternate into basic plumage (which is more similar to juvenile plumage). [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-bellied Plover](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Black-bellied_Plover)



Suggested Resources:

Online: visit <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide> where you can search by species. Under the ID info tab are photos of various plumages.

Book: The Shorebird Guide by Michael O'Brien.